

The firste vertu, sone, if thou wolt leere,  
Is to restreine and kepe wel thy tonge;  
Thus lerne children whan that they been yonge.  
My sone, of muchel spekyng yvele avysed,  
Ther lasse spekyng hadde ynough suffised,  
Comth muchel harm, thus was me toold and  
taught.  
In muchel speche synne wanteth naught.  
Mostow wherof a rakel tonge serveth?  
Right as a swerd forkutteth and forkerveth  
An arm atwo, my deere sone, right so  
A tonge kutteth frendshipe al atwo.  
A jangler is to God abhominable;  
Reed Salomon, so wys and honorable;  
Reed David in his Psalmes, reed Senekke.  
My sone, speke nat, but with thyn heed thou bekke.  
Dissimule as thou were deaf, if that thou heere  
A jangler speke of perilous mateere.  
The flemmyng seith, and lerne it if thee leste,  
That Litel janglyng causeth muchel reste.  
My sone, if thou no wikked word hast seyde,  
Thee thar nat drede for to be biwreyd;  
But he that hath mysseyd, I dar wel sayn,  
He may by no wey clepe his word agayn.  
Chyng that is seyde, is seyde; and forth it gooth,  
Thoug hym repente, or be hym leef or looth.  
He is his thral to whom that he hath sayd  
A tale, of which he is now yvele apayd.  
My sone, be war, and be noon auctour newe  
Of tidynges, whether they been false or trewe.  
Wherso thou come, amonges hye or lowe,  
Kepe wel thy tonge, and thenk upon the crowe.  
Here is ended the Maunciples Tale of the Crowe.

Here folweth the prologe of the Persones Tale.

**B**y that the maunciple hadde  
his tale al ended,  
The sonne fro the south  
lyne was descended  
So lowe, that he nas nat, to  
my sighte  
Degrees nyne and twenty  
as in highte.  
foure of the klokke it was  
tho, as I gesse;  
for elevene foot, or litel moore or lesse,  
My shadwe was at thilke tyme, as there  
Of swiche feet as my lengthe parted were  
In sixe feet equal of proporcioun.  
Therwith the moones exaltacioun,  
I meene Libra, alwey gan ascende,  
As we were entryng at a thropes ende;  
for which our Hoost, as he was wont to gye,  
As in this caas, oure joly compaignye,  
Seyde in this wise. Lordynges everichoon,  
Now lakketh us no tales mo than oon.  
fulfilled is my sentence and my decree;  
I trowe that we han herd of ech degree.

Almoost fulfild is al myn ordinaunce;  
I pray to God so yeve hym right good chaunce  
That telleth this tale to us lustily.  
Sire preest, quod he, artow a vicary?  
Or arte a person? sey sooth, by thy fey!  
Be what thou be, ne breke thou nat oure pley;  
for every man, save thou, hath toold his tale;  
Unbokele, and shewe us what is in thy male;  
for trewely, me thynketh, by thy cheere,  
Thou sholdest knytte up wel a greet mateere.  
Telle us a fable anon, for cokkes bones!

**T**his persoun, him answerde al atones,  
for Paul, that writeth unto Thymothee,  
Repretheth hem that weyveth soothfastnesse,  
And tellen fables and swich wretchednesse.  
Why sholde I sowen draf out of my fest,  
Whan I may sowen whete, if that me lest?  
for which I seye, if that yow list to heere  
Moralitee and vertuous mateere,  
And thanne that ye wol yeve me audience,  
I wol ful fayn, at Cristes reverence,  
Do yow plesaunce leefful, as I kan.  
But trusteth wel, I am a southren man,  
I kan nat geeste rum, ram, ruf, by letre,  
Ne, God woot, rym holde I but litel bettre;  
And therefore, if yow list, I wol nat glose.  
I wol yow telle a myrie tale in prose  
To knytte up al this feeste, and make an ende.  
And Jhesu, for his grace, wit me sende  
To shewe yow the wey, in this viage,  
Of thilke parfit glorious pilgrymage  
That highte Jerusalem celestial.  
And, if ye vouchesauf, anon I shal  
Bigynne upon my tale, for which I preye  
Telle youre avys, I kan no better seye.  
But natheles, this meditacioun  
I putte it ay under correccioun  
Of clerkes, for I am nat textueel;  
I take but the sentence, trusteth wel.  
Therefore I make protestacioun  
That I wol stonde to correccioun.

**A**pon this word we han assented  
soone,  
for, as us samed, it was for to doone,  
To enden in som vertuous sentence,  
And for to yeve hym space and audience;  
And bede oure Hoost he sholde to hym seye,  
That alle we to telle his tale hym preye.  
Oure Hoost hadde the wordes for us alle:  
Sire preest, quod he, now faire yow bifalle!  
Sey what yow list, and we wol gladly heere;  
And with that word, he seyde in this manere:  
Tellethe, quod he, youre meditacioun.  
But hasteth yow, the sonne wol adoun;  
Beth fructuous, and that in litel space,  
And to do wel God sende yow his grace.  
Explicit prohemium.

# HERE BIGYNNETH THE PERSONS TALE

Jer. vi. State super vias et videte et inter-  
rogate de viis antiquis, que sit via bona; et  
ambulabunt in ea, et invenietis refrigerium  
animabus vestris, &c.

**O** sweete Lord  
God of hevene, that  
no man wole per-  
isse, but wole that  
we comen alle to the  
knowleche of hym,  
& to the blissful lif  
that is perdurable,  
amongesteth us by  
the prophete Jere-  
mie, and seith in this wyse. Stondeth  
upon the weyes, & seeth and axeth of olde  
pathes, that is to seyn, of olde sentences,  
which is the goode wey; & walketh in that  
wey, and ye shal fynde refreshynge for  
yourre soules, &c.

**N**YNE been the weyes espiutuels  
that leden folk to oure Lord Jhesu  
Crist, and to the regne of glorie.  
Of whiche weyes, ther is a ful noble wey  
and a ful covenable, which may nat fayle to  
no man ne to womman, that thurgh synne  
hath mysgoon fro the righte wey of Jeru-  
salem celestial; & this wey is cleped peni-  
tence; of which man sholde gladly herknen  
& enquire with al his herte; to wyten what  
is penitence, and whennes it is cleped peni-  
tence, and in how many maneres been the  
acciouns or werkynge of penitence, and  
how many speces ther been of penitence,  
and whiche thynges apertenen and biho-  
ven to penitence, and whiche thynges des-  
tourben penitence.

**S**EINT Ambrose seith, that Peni-  
tence is the pleyninge of man for  
the gilt that he hath doon, and na-  
moore to do any thyng for which hym  
oghte to pleyne. And som doctour seith:  
Penitence is the waymentynge of man, that  
sorweth for his synne, and pyneth hym-  
self for he hath mysdoon. Penitence,  
with certeyne circumstances, is verray re-  
pentance of a man that halt hymself in  
sorwe & oother payne for his gyltes. And  
for he shal be verray penitent, he shal first  
biwaylen the synnes that he hath doon,  
and stidefastly purposen in his herte to  
have shrift of mouthe, and to doon satis-  
faccioun, and nevere to doon thyng for  
which hym oghte moore to biwayle or to  
compleyne, & to continue in goode werkis;  
or elles his repentance may nat avayle, for  
as seith Seint Ysidre. He is a japer and  
agabber, and no verray repentant, that eft-  
soone dooth thyng for which hym oghte  
repente. Wepynge, & nat for to stynt to

do synne, may nat avaylle. But natheles,  
men shal hope that every tyme that man  
falleth, be it never so ofte, that he may arise  
thurgh penitence, if he have grace; but cer-  
teinly it is greet doute. For, as seith Seint  
Gregorie. Annethe ariseth he out of  
synne, that is charged with the charge of  
yvel usage. And therefore repentant folk,  
that stynte for to synne, and forlete synne  
er that synne forlete hem, hooly chirche  
holdeth hem siker of hire savacioun. And  
he that synneth, & verraily repenteth hym  
in his laste ende, hooly chirche yet hopeth  
his savacioun, by the grete mercy of oure  
Lord Jhesu Crist, for his repentaunce;  
but taak the siker wey.

**A**ND now, sith I have declared yow  
what thyng is penitence, now shul  
ye understonde that ther been three  
acciouns of penitence. The firste accioun  
of penitence is, that a man be baptized  
after that he hath synned. Seint Augustyn  
seith: But he be penitent for his olde syn-  
ful lyf, he may nat bigynne the newe clene  
lif. For certes, if he be baptized with-  
outen penitence of his olde gilt, he recey-  
veth the mark of baptesme, but nat the  
grace ne the remission of his synnes, til  
he have repentance verray. Another de-  
faute is this, that men doon deedly synne  
after that they han receyved baptesme.  
The thridde defaute is, that men fallen in  
venial synnes after hir baptesme, fro day  
to day. Therof seith Seint Augustyn, that  
Penitence of goode and humble folk is the  
penitence of every day.

**T**HE speces of penitence been thre.  
That oon of hem is solemne, an-  
other is commune, and the thridde  
is privee. Thilke penance that is solemne,  
is in two maneres; as to be put out of hooly  
chirche in lente, for slaughtre of children,  
& swich maner thyng. Another is, whan  
a man hath synned openly, of which synne  
the fame is openly spoken in the contree;  
and thanne hooly chirche by juggement de-  
streyneth hym for to do open penaunce.  
Commune penaunce is that preestes en-  
joynen men in certeyn caas; as for to goon,  
peraventure, naked in pilgrimages, or bare-  
foot. Pryvee penaunce is thilke that men  
doon alday for privee synnes, of whiche  
they shryve hem prively, and receyve privee  
penaunce.

**N**OW shaltow understande what is  
bihovely and necessarie to verray  
perfit penitence. And this stant on  
thre thynges: contricioun of herte, confes-  
sioun of mouth, & satisfaccioun, for which  
seith Seint John Crisostom. Penitence